

CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTION OF THE LEESBURG AREA

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HISTORY

The Leesburg area has always been the social, judicial and political focus of Loudoun County. The Town of Leesburg was founded in 1758 at the critical junction of the Vestal's Gap Road (Route 7) and the Carolina Road (Route 15). The Vestal's Gap Road linked the port communities of Alexandria and Georgetown to the largely unsettled hinterland via gaps in the Catoctin and Blue Ridge ranges, while the Carolina Road, originally an indian trail, was the westernmost north-south route of the original thirteen colonies. Today the Town of Leesburg retains as its core the original town, now a designated local, state and national historic site. In addition, the Town has expanded to the south and east and provides new shopping and employment centers as well as new residential communities. The central historic district still contains the traditional county governmental functions that have existed there since the 18th century. The historic district itself has become a focus for tourism, an important county industry.

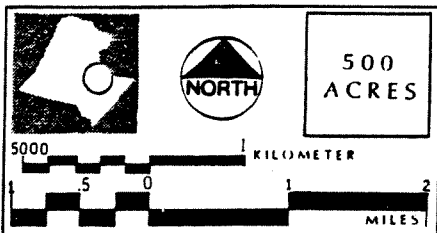
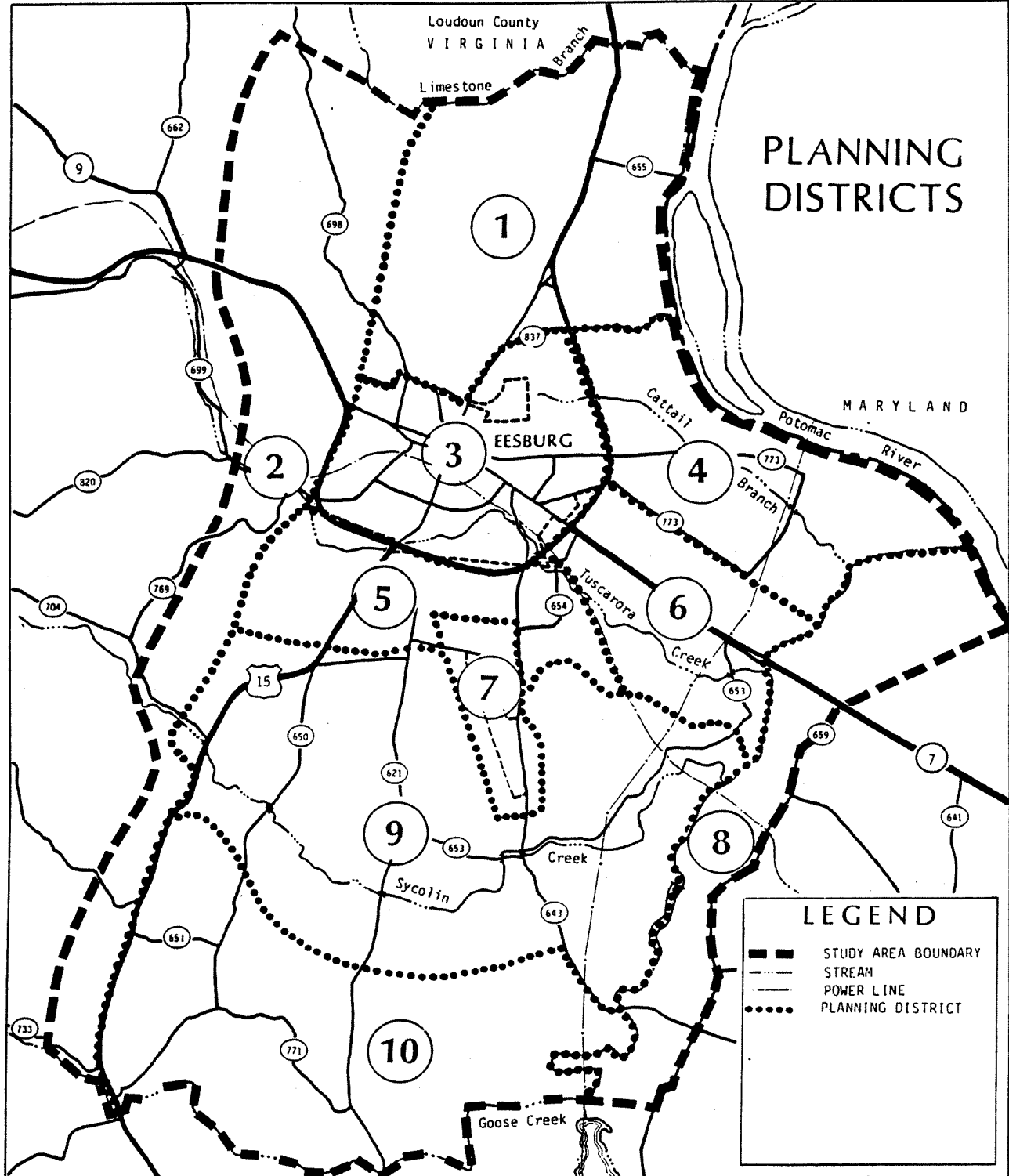
BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION (see Figure 2, Page 2)

The Leesburg planning area comprises the Big Spring, Cattail Branch, Tuscarora, Sycolin and Goose Creek watersheds but excludes the Town of Leesburg. The planning area begins at the confluence of Limestone Branch and the Potomac River to the north. This northern boundary extends along Limestone Branch from the Potomac River to the Catoctin Ridge. The Ridge forms the entire western boundary of the planning area. Goose Creek provides the southern boundary as it flows east to a curve just north of Beaverdam Creek. The boundary leaves Goose Creek at this point and proceeds due east to Route 659. The eastern boundary of the planning area is marked by Route 659, following the approximate Goose Creek watershed and extending through the Xerox property to the Potomac River at the northern tip of Selden Island. The Potomac River constitutes the northern boundary of the planning area from the Xerox property to Limestone Branch.

The entire planning area was divided into nine districts whose primary geographic boundaries are natural features or roads but which were established and defined because of similarities of land use within each district. The primary concern was for drainage areas, but other cultural boundaries were considered important.

FIGURE 2

LEESBURG AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN



- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. White's Ferry | 6. Lower Tuscarora |
| 2. Catoctin Ridge | 7. Airport |
| 3. Town of Leesburg | 8. Goose Creek |
| 4. Edwards' Ferry | 9. Sycolin |
| 5. Upper Tuscarora | 10. Oatlands |

LEESBURG AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

White's Ferry, the northernmost district, is bounded by the Catoctin Ridge, Limestone Branch, the Potomac River, the Balls Bluff Road and the northern limits of the Town of Leesburg. The major characteristic of the area is its limestone geology which puts certain restrictions on development. Currently the main uses are farming, residential and institutional.

Southeast of White's Ferry is the Edwards' Ferry District. The area is characterized by farmland and low density residential development but with a different underlying geology. Its eastern boundary is Goose Creek; its southern boundary Route 773 to the point where it turns north after which the boundary goes across country to Goose Creek. On the west the district is bounded by the Town limits, on the north by Balls Bluff Road and on the northeast by the Potomac River.

The Goose Creek District is bounded on the north by the Potomac River and extends to the southern edge of the Planning Area. Its western boundary follows Goose Creek and it extends to the eastern ridge of the watershed at Route 659. This district has a number of significant diabase rock formations which are presently being mined. It also contains the water impoundment and water treatment facility of the City of Fairfax on Goose Creek. County policy towards this district is one of natural resource preservation. Consequently, residential development along Route 659 would be discouraged.

Upper and Lower Tuscarora Districts, named for the watershed they encompass, are slated for residential and nonresidential development. They are very close to the town on its southern and eastern boundaries in the general direction of development. Lower Tuscarora involves primarily industrial development, upper Tuscarora primarily residential. Both are bounded on the south by the Tuscarora watershed, on the north by the Town and the southern boundary of Edwards' Ferry District, on the east by Goose Creek and the west by Catoctin Ridge. The two are divided by the W&OD Trail.

The Airport District comprises roughly 1,000 feet in all directions from Godfrey Field. Development is restricted and should be compatible with the nature of the airport itself. The northern portion of this district and the present airport facility would be permitted central sewer extension in order to ensure the present airport's continued viability.

The Sycolin District, encompassing the Sycolin Creek watershed, is primarily in agricultural and large lot residential use. There is a limited amount of industrially zoned land in the northeast. It is rather less rural than the Oatlands District but should not be considered for public sewer and water extension.

The Oatlands District is the most rural of the districts and should be maintained as an agricultural area.

The Catoctin Ridge District stretches from the northern to the southern boundaries of the planning area along the ridge. Sewer should not be extended into this district. Thus, only large lot residential use is really feasible. There is some farmland in the north but the majority of this land is steep and wooded.

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The Leesburg area occupies a low shelf of the Catoctin foothills. The topography falls away to the east and consequently the area's streams, Limestone Branch, Big Spring Branch and Goose Creek and its tributaries, Cattail, Tuscarora and Sycolin, flow in that direction. Tuscarora Creek crosses a portion of the Town in the southwest and its tributary, the Town Branch, traverses the Town from west to east. Northeast of the Town of Leesburg is the Potomac River, the boundary between Virginia and Maryland and the site of a local Civil War action, the battle of Ball's Bluff. This area is characterized by a geological formation unusual for this region. The underlying rock is a limestone conglomerate, a water soluble stone that erodes underground in large planes forming caves. The topography south of Leesburg, by contrast, is more gentle and was molded primarily by overland water flow and mature stream systems.

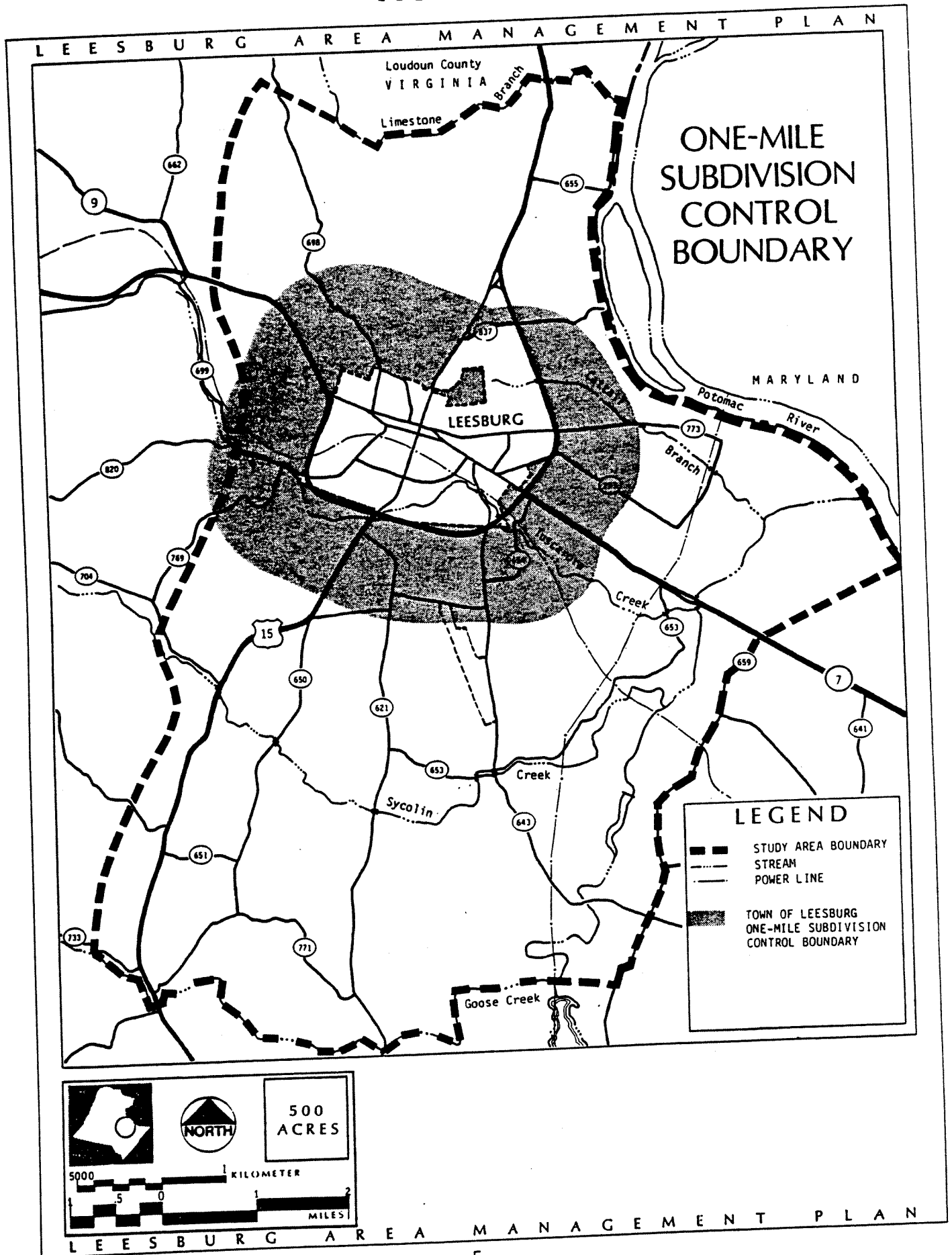
TOWN OF LEESBURG

The Town of Leesburg is an independent jurisdiction of approximately 8,360 people and is situated close to the center of the planning area. The Town occupies an area of roughly 2,375 acres or 3.75 square miles. As a separate legal jurisdiction, among other public functions, it maintains its own roads, decides on land use and zoning within its corporate limits, maintains subdivision control for a one-mile radius around the town limits (see figure 3, page 5) and operates a sewer and water facility. It does not finance and operate a school system. Leesburg is the county seat of Loudoun County and consequently many county institutions are headquartered within the Town.

POPULATION

The population of the Leesburg area, including the Town of Leesburg, in 1980 was estimated to be 11,280, based on the preliminary 1980 Census figures. Of this figure some 8,360 people are estimated to live in the Town of Leesburg itself with the remaining 2,920 people living in the actual planning area.

FIGURE 3



EXISTING LAND USE

The area chosen for analysis in the Leesburg Area Management Plan comprises some 31,010 acres of land or approximately 50 square miles, and three major watersheds, Tuscarora, Sycolin and Goose Creek. Land use character in the area is changing from predominantly rural and farm-based to urbanizing with some urban services and residential, commercial and industrial development. Figure 4, page 7 shows the land use for the area in 1980. Table 1, "Land Use in the Leesburg Area", shows the approximate amounts and percentage proportions of land use in 1978-1979.

The Town of Leesburg should cooperate with the County to promote the implementation of the density transfer program. Land use referral for future zoning applications should be the process whereby the Town could accept potential density transfers. The goal will be to promote a density pattern within the Urban Limit Line similar to the traditional Town development pattern, while reserving land in the rural areas of Loudoun County for agriculture and permanent open space.

TABLE 1

LAND USE IN THE LEESBURG AREA *
(Excluding the Town of Leesburg)

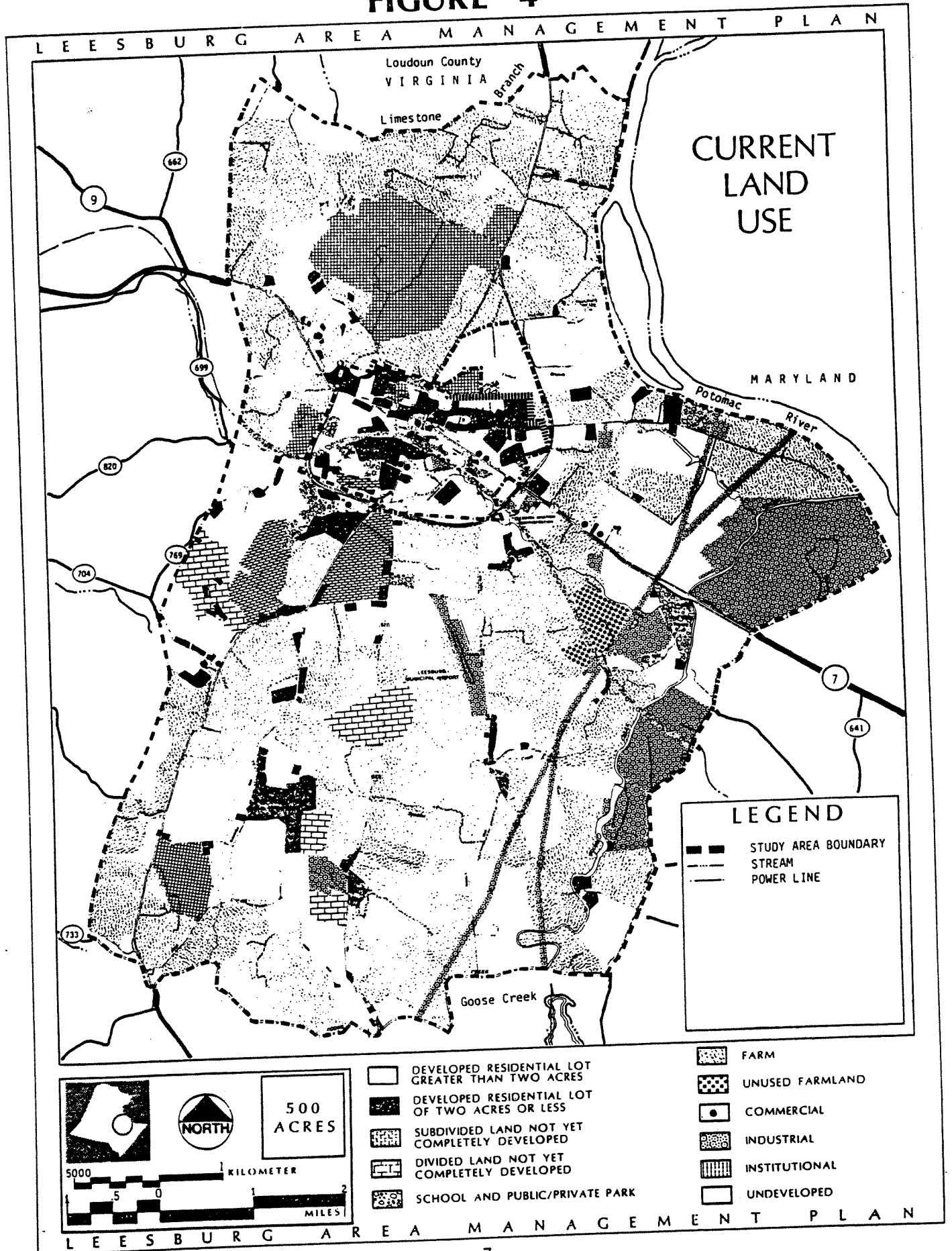
(Approximate Figures)

| | <u>Number of Acres</u> | <u>Percen- tage</u> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Active Farms (over 20 acres) | 14,930 | 48 % |
| Undeveloped Land (Unfarmed woodland, open space and undeveloped subdivided land) | 8,940 | 29 % |
| Institutional (Educational, medical, equestrian, museum & children's home) | 2,980 | 10 % |
| Residential (Large lot & single-family suburban**) | 3,170 | 10 % |
| Quarries | 470 | 1.5% |
| Publicly owned land | 340 | 1 % |
| Industrial | 100 | - |
| Churches | 20 | - |
| Wholesale/Retail | 20 | - .5% |
| Multi-family | 20 | - |
| Auto sales and service | 20 | - |
| | <u>31,010</u> | <u>100 %</u> |

* Derived from the Loudoun County Commissioner of the Revenue through Real Estate Atlas, 1979 as updated with inspection of aerial photographs and field checks.

** Includes the 379 acres of residential property included in the annexation of January 1, 1981.

FIGURE 4



Clearly, farm uses predominate. The second greatest percentage is in undeveloped, transitional land with 28%. The 10% in institutional use is surprising but includes the large tracts of Morven Park and Xerox as well as the smaller Paxton Home, Children's Rehabilitation Center and Springwood.

RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

The number of existing residential units outside the corporate limits of the Town of Leesburg is shown in Table 2. Much of the recent residential growth has been south of Leesburg on Route 15 on one-quarter acre, single-family lots served by the Town's sewer.

TABLE 2

HOUSING IN THE LEESBURG AREA*
(Excluding the Town of Leesburg)

| <u>Type of Housing Unit</u> | <u>Number of Units</u> | <u>Percentage of Units</u> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Single-family (sewered) | 239 | 27% |
| Multi-family | 231 | 26 |
| Large lot single-family | 413 | 47 |
| Total | <u>883</u> | <u>100%</u> |

Many residential subdivisions and small divisions of land have developed within the proposed Urban Limit Line (see Introduction, p. iii). However, extensive large lot development means that considerable rural land is being converted to low density, rural residential use which is a popular development trend.

* Derived from the Loudoun County Commissioner of the Revenue through Real Estate Atlas, 1979, as updated by inspection of aerial photographs and field checks.

INDUSTRIAL AND EMPLOYMENT

Southeast of Leesburg and along Route 7, the land uses are predominantly of an industrial or office nature. The Federal Aviation Administration's major mid-Atlantic Air Traffic Control Center is located on Route 7 just east of Leesburg. The Virginia Trap Rock and Luck Quarry crushed stone works have attracted a number of secondary industries such as concrete block and bituminous road surfacing plants. Development on the north side of Route 7 has been discouraged by the high cost of bringing sewer under Route 7 to the properties.

COMMERCIAL

Extensive commercial development has been limited to the Town of Leesburg and the areas within the proposed Urban Limit Line, except for a few small shops and stores scattered along Route 15 to the south of the Town and to the east along Route 7. Ample zoning exists for extensive commercial growth in the area.

EXISTING ZONING (see Figure 5, page 10)

As Table 3 indicates, the majority of the area (80%) is zoned for single-family development on three acre minimum lots (A-3). The balance of the residentially zoned property ranges from the one-acre single-family zone (R-1) to the higher multi-family zones of PDH-30.

FIGURE 5

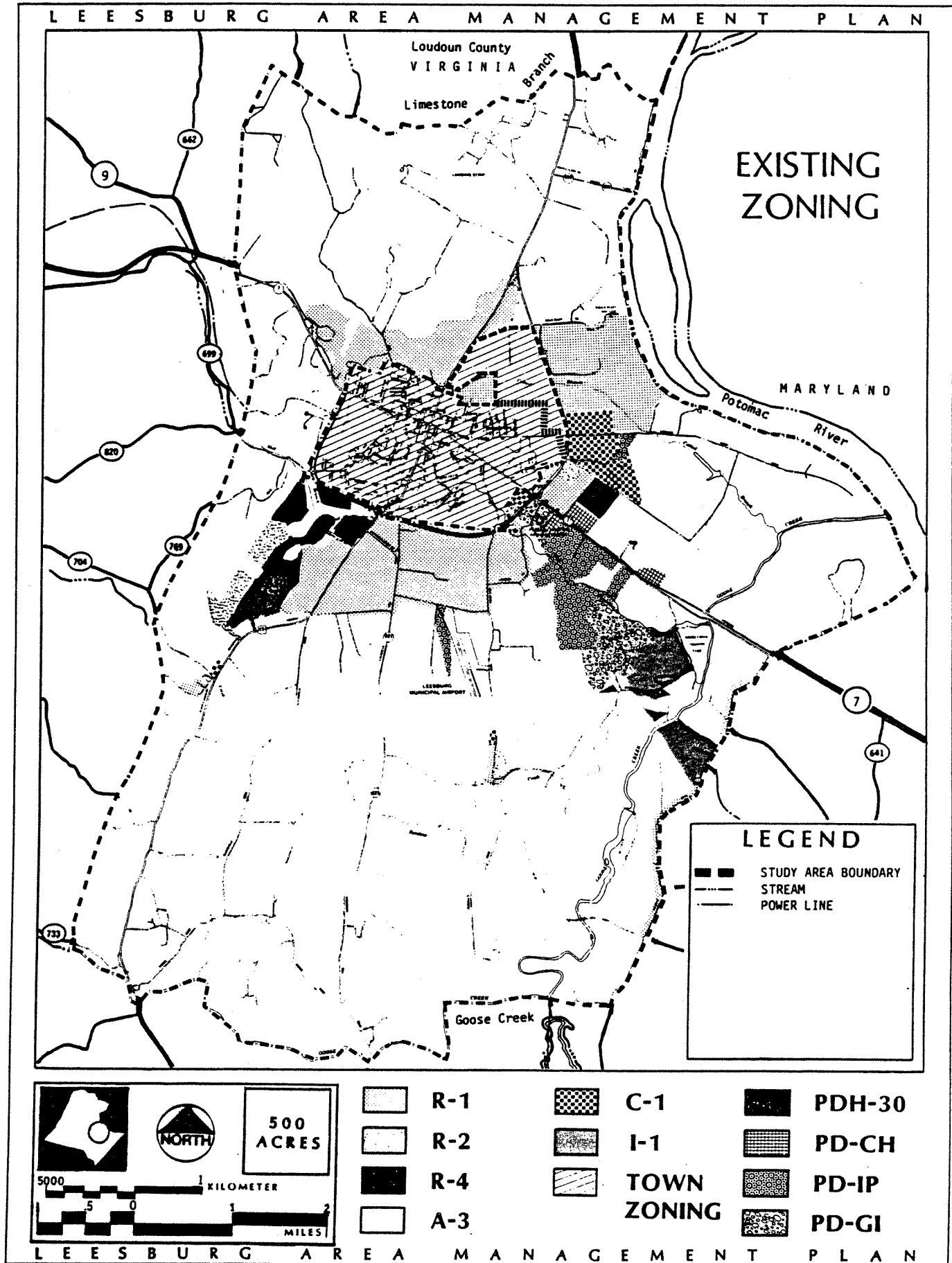


TABLE 3
ZONING IN THE LEESBURG AREA
(Excluding the Town of Leesburg)
(Generalized)

| <u>Zoning</u> | <u>Acres</u> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| A-3 (Agricultural/Residential - minimum residential lot: three acres) | 24,310 |
| R-1 (Residential - Minimum lot size: one acre) | 2,500* |
| R-2 (Residential - Minimum lot size: one-half acre) | 190 |
| R-4 (Residential - Minimum lot size: one-quarter acre) | 120 |
| PDH-30 (Multi-family, townhouse/apartment) | 70 |
| C-1 (Commercial - retail) | 250 |
| PD-CH (Planned Development - Highway Commercial) | 50 |
| I (Industrial) | 540 |
| PD-IP (Planned Development - light industrial) | 720 |
| PD-GI (Planned Development - general, heavy industrial) | 430 |
| Exempt (Federal, State and Local service/institutional) | 1,830 |
| Total | <u>31,010</u> |

2,500 acres of land to the north, east and south of Leesburg are zoned R-1. To the east of Route 15, some 185 acres of the Hoffman rezoning project are zoned R-4 to accommodate up to 450 units. In the Catoctin foothills to the west of the Hoffman property, 115 acres of land are zoned R-2 with a proffered development maximum of 38 units. Closer to Leesburg, the 200 acre Country Club development is zoned R-4 while the neighboring apartments are zoned PDH-30. The golf course itself has retained the original A-3 zoning of the area.

East of the Route 7 Bypass, Cardinal Industrial Park and East Leesburg Hills, approximately 430 acres, are zoned PD-GI, while Leegate Industrial Park, comprising 371 acres, and Harper South, 158 acres, are zoned PD-IP. The PDH-30 residential zoning district exists south of Fort Evans Road (57 acres) in contrast to the surrounding non-residential property. Further east, across Goose Creek are the Virginia Trap Rock and Luck Quarry crushed stone enterprises which, with their satellites, cover 522 acres of potential industry and are zoned I-1. A smaller parcel of PD-IP, 93 acres east of Godfrey Field, is intended to buffer the residential zones from aircraft noise.

* The Town of Leesburg annexed on January 1, 1980, 379 acres of land previously zoned R-1 situated between Route 15 and the Leesburg Bypass to the south of Route 837. This acreage is included in these figures.

Loudoun County has pursued a policy of keeping commercial uses off Route 7 and this is reflected on the zoning map. East of Leesburg and between Edwards Ferry and Fort Evans Road, 227 acres are zoned C-1 along the Route 15 Bypass to the north. Two properties are zoned PD-CH on Route 7 east of Leesburg. These are 21 acres of wholesale/retail furniture showrooms and the eight acres of the McMichael property which the County rezoned largely to preserve the historic house in a new "country restaurant" use.

At the southern tip of the planning area, the Oatlands planning district is probably the most homogeneous district in terms of land use. It is primarily agricultural and large lot residential, zoned A-3. In the Gleedsville area on Route 650 there are approximately 20 single-family homes on smaller lots but, on balance, the area is made up predominantly of large tracts.